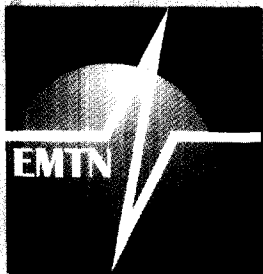# EASTERN MONTANA TELEMEDICINE NETWORK

December 17, 1996

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
1919 M Street, N.W., Room 222
Washington, D.C.   20554

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network began in 1993 as a cooperative effort among healthcare providers in eastern Montana, utilizing two-way interactive videoconferencing technology to deliver specialist medical and mental health services, continuing medical and higher education, administrative and community development activities. A grant from the Rural Utilities Services funded the equipment for the original five rural sites. Deaconess-Billings Clinic Health System (DBCHS), the tertiary center and project hub, was funded by a grant from the Deaconess Foundation. A three year grant awarded in October of 1994, from the Office of Rural Health Policy has allowed the EMTN to plan and execute growth that was feasible and cost effective. In years one and two of the ORHP grant, four sites joined our network. In our third and final year, the Community Health Center site of Montana's first Family Practice Residency Program will join our network.

Montana is renowned for its striking scenic beauty, unspoiled wilderness and frontier lifestyles. Unfortunately, these same features create tremendous barriers to accessing healthcare. One way drives of two to three hours to access specialty services are the rule, rather than the exception for most regions of the state. Vast distances separate towns and cities, and their residents from one another.

With a 1994 population of 856,047, Montana ranks 44th nationally. Yet it is fourth in size with over 147,000 square miles, an area that could cover states of New York, New Jersey, kentucky, Maryland and Tennessee. Nearly one-third of the state's population lives in the three population areas of Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula, leaving large sections of the state with very sparse population. Numerous passes and long stretches of prarie with inadequate roads and treacherous weather conditions can, at times, make health care completely inaccessbile to those in rural areas.

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List ABCDE

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Participating Sites

Behavioral Health Clinic
Billings, Montana
(406) 255-8550

Colstrip Medical Center
Colstrip, Montana
(406) 748-3600

Community Memorial Hospital
Sidney, Montana
(406) 482-2120

Eastern Montana Community
Mental Health Center
Miles City, Montana
(406) 232-0234

Fallon Medical Center
Baker, Montana
(406) 778-3331

Frances Mahon Deaconess
Hospital
Glasgow, Montana
(406) 228-4351

Glendive Medical Center
Glendive, Montana
(406) 365-3306

Montana Hospital
Association
Helena, Montana
(406) 442-1911

Roosevelt Memorial Hospital
& Nursing Home
Culbertson, Montana
(406) 787-6281

It is not by chance that the Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network has been extremely successful in meeting its original goal; need creates demand. During this past grant year, we conducted a total of 1284 conferences with 13, 334 participants. Transmission costs still pose the greated threat to the ongoing viability of our network and will restrict additional growth. The $120,000.00 transmission budget represents one-third of our operational budget for this year. Healthcare facilities throughout our region continue to express a desire to join our network, but see on-going transmission cost as an inpenetrable financial barrier.

The Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network is requesting your support in the proposed language of the Universal Service Provision:
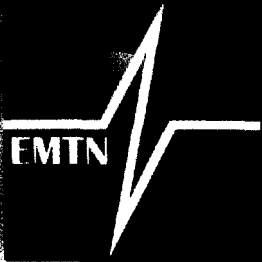
> . . . that rural public and not-for-profit healthcare providers would be charged rates comparable to urban rates, eliminating distance sensitive fees, for telecommunications services up to 1.544 MBPS, that are necessary for the provision of healthcare.

The impact of adopting this language would be paramount to the long term viability of the EMTN and will support the continued development of telemedicine in the state of Montana and other rural areas throughout the country.

Sincerely,

Thelma McClosky Armstrong
Director

EASTERN MONTANA TELEMEDICINE NETWORK

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Participating

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Colstrip, Montana
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Community Memorial Hospital
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Culbertson, Montana
(406) 787-6281

1. **Project Name:** Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network

2. **Name of Sites:**
    Deaconess Billings Clinic Health System
    Deaconess Behavioral Health Center
    Eastern Montana Community Mental Health Center
    Glendive Medical Center
    Sidney Health Center
    Fallon Medical Complex
    Colstrip Medical Center
    Roosevelt Memorial Hospital
    Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital
    Montana Hospital Association

Questions 3 - 6
    Please refer to attached spread sheet

7. **How does the project use telecommunications in the delivery of health care?**
The Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network is an interactive videoconferencing network that provides medical and mental health consultation services,continuing medical and higher education, administrative and telebusiness services throughout eastern Montana. Medical consultation can be provided by a full array of specialist including 24 hour a day access to the Deaconess Biilings Clinic Health Systems Emergency Department.

8. **Could the Project provide the services it is currently providing with less Bandwidth?**
Absolutely Not. When the EMTN designed its network, we made some very difficult decision based on the economic realities of telecommunication costs. We are using the **MINIMUM** acceptable bandwidth. For many of our consultative activities such as pathology, speech pathology and neurology full T-1 service would enable us to maximize the quality of the diagnostic information received by our consultants.

9. **What would the implication of having a greater level of bandwidth be?**
As stated above, better quality of diagnostic imaging and live transmission thereby improving the diagnostic capabilities of our health care providers.

10. **Do you have e-mail?**
At the present time none of the EMTN sites except the Montana Hospital Association (MHA) and the Network hub at Deaconess Billings Clinic Health System (DBCHS) have E-Mail.

11. **Internet Access?**
All sites have access to the internet but would pay a long distance charge for those services.
DBCHS and the MHA do not pay long distance rates for internet.

Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network

Sites	Mileage	Carrier	Service	Monthly Costs	Usage	Install	Per mile Fee/Fixed Portion	Discounted
Behavioral Health	0	US West	384 kbps	$200.00	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$12.04 per mile/$104.00	Tariffed
Billings	0	US West	384 kbps	$ 1,945.40	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$12.04 per mile/$104.00	Tariffed
Colstrip	120	US West	384 kbps	$ 934.04	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$12.04 per mile/$104.00	Tariffed
Glendive	222	US West	384 kbps	$ 1,186.66	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$12.04 per mile/$104.00	Tariffed
Sidney	272	US West	384 kbps	$ 922.00	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$12.04 per mile/$104.00	Tariffed
Culbertson	309	US West	384 kbps	$ 472.77	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$14.99 per mile/$196.00	Tariffed
		Nemont		582.28				15%
Billings Dial-up		AT&T	384 kbps	486.92	$36 per hr	$ 600.00		36%
Helena Dial-up	*89	AT&T	384 kbps	486.92	$36 per hr	$ 600.00		36%
Glasgow	279	Nemont	384 kbps	815.67	n/a	$ 1,200.00	$15.06 per mile	15%
		Valley		815.67				15%
Baker	225	M-rivers	384 kbps	$ 600.00	n/a	$ 850.00		50%
		US West		$ 167.73			$14.99 per mile/$196.00	Tariffed
				$ 9,616.06		$ 10,450.00		

Note - closest town of 50,000 to all EMTN sites is Billings
*except Helena which is closer to Great Falls